



**SIERRA
CLUB**
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MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER

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Local Control of Personal Watercraft (“Jet Skis”)

Formal Title: An Act Relative to Jet Skis, Surf Jets, Wet Bikes, and Other Personal Watercraft in Municipalities

Sponsor: Rep. Jim O’Day

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H1565

Enables cities/towns to place restrictions on smaller bodies of water that are enclosed within the municipality if they so desire, for such as limiting hours, or curtailing use during sensitive waterfowl migration periods.

New England Patriots lineman Marquise Hill was killed in a PWC accident. Just one week later, a 9-year-old girl was left struggling for her life after she was struck by another PWC on Indian Lake in Worcester. Personal watercraft exhibit specific threats to the safety of the rider and wildlife. This bill provides a small step forward in allowing local communities to address the numerous safety and environmental problems with these crafts.

PWCs are fundamentally different from traditional motorboats, moving by forcing water through the vessel by a type of “jet propulsion”. Due to this design, the vast majority of PWCs do not have the ability to stop or react quickly to an obstacle in their path.

A study funded by the U.S. Coast Guard found that even at 20 MPH, the drivers were unable to avoid the obstacle 21% of the time, and at 55 MPH, they were unable to avoid the obstacle 86% of the time. This problem has become exacerbated by the fact that newer PWCs have even more power, with new models going up to 250 horsepower. That’s more power than many cars on the road today.

Protects the health of our waterways:

In addition, PWCs emit toxic chemicals such as benzene (a known carcinogen), MTBE (which has been found to cause cancer in lab animals), and toluene (which affects the nervous system) into our air and water. PWCs are also often operated closer to land and in shallower waters – areas that are typically used for nesting by waterfowl, aquatic mammals, many fish species, and turtles. Many birds nest in close proximity to the water, including threatened species such as loons, eagles, plovers, hawks, and osprey.

This bill does not ban PWCs.

It will simply give local communities the option to enact sensible restrictions, such as regulating use during migratory periods.

Rhode Island and New York, among others, have already passed “home rule” laws regarding PWC use. Other nearby states have already or are in the process of enacting stricter PWC regulations. For example, Vermont has banned PWCs from waterways under 300 acres in size. Maine has banned them from 245 great ponds.